

Local Access Forum

Item No.

Report title:	Countryside Access arrangements update
Date of meeting:	11 October 2017
Responsible Officer:	Steve Miller, Assistant Director, Culture and Heritage
Strategic impact To address the concerns raised by the Local Access Forum with regards to Public Rights of Way Management and delivering the service in an economic and cost effective way.	

Executive summary

At the July 2017 Local Access Forum, it was agreed that at each future meeting, a summary of the work the Countryside Access Officers and Environment teams would be provided.

This paper highlights this work in terms of the volumes of customer queries received and responded to. The paper also highlights other key areas of work.

Recommendations:

That the Local Access Forum note the progress made to date since the Countryside Access Officer posts were introduced.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Since 1 April 2017, there is a single point of contact within each Highways Area office being responsible for their local rights of way issues. By having the officer within the Area office they are more “on the ground” and better placed to deal with the operational reactive issues that occur when managing rights of way. They are supported by the wider Highways Area team staff. Other officers were retained within County Hall to carry out strategic and developmental aspects of developing the countryside access network.

2. Performance

- 2.1. The tables below summarise the performance information available for the complete months between April and August 2017. As well as breaking down the information between North, South & West, the classification of the report is also highlighted. From this information it can be seen that the majority of reports relate to overgrown surfaces, overgrown hedges and trees and damaged and missing signs.

Row Labels	North	South	Trails	West	Grand Total
	3	4			7
PROW - Animal(s)	3	2		5	10
PROW - Bridge	4	14		3	21
PROW - Crops/ploughing affecting footpath	61	63		12	136
PROW - Damaged or missing sign	62	99		20	181
PROW - Dirty sign		1			1
PROW - Flooded Path	2	12		1	15
PROW - Gate/Barrier	26	28		7	61
PROW - Illegal / Vehicle Use	7	6		6	19

PROW - Misleading sign	17	20		4	41
PROW - Obstruction -e.g. building works, fences, ditches, locked gate	47	38		14	99
PROW - Overgrown hedge/tree	97	88		24	209
PROW - Overgrown surface -e.g. grass/weeds	91	75		53	219
PROW - Steps damaged/other	8	6		2	16
PROW - Stile damaged/too/high/other	11	22		11	44
PROW - Surface condition	44	37		21	102
PROW - Tree dangerous/fallen	19	24		1	44
Trail - Animal(s)			2		2
Trail - Crops/ploughing affecting footpath			2		2
Trail - Damaged or missing sign	3	3	3		9
Trail - Dirty sign		1			1
Trail - Gate/Barrier		1			1
Trail - Illegal / Vehicle Use	1				1
Trail - Misleading sign	7		3	1	11
Trail - Overgrown hedge/tree	1	1	4		6
Trail - Overgrown surface -e.g. grass/weeds	14	2	20	5	41
Trail - Steps damaged/other	2		3	1	6
Trail - Surface condition	3	1	3		7
Trail - Tree dangerous/fallen	7	5	3	1	16
Trail- Obstruction -e.g. building works, fences, ditches, locked gate		3	1	2	6
Trail- Stile damaged/too/high/other	1				1
Grand Total	541	556	44	194	1335

2.2. At the end of August, 52% of the 1,335 queries had been resolved.

2.3. In addition to the numbers above, there have been a number of enforcement notices sent out to landowners. The following have been issued:

- 85 number Section 134-137 Non-reinstatement Notices sent
- 11 number Section 143 Removal Obstruction Notices sent

To date 85 of the 96 have resolved and the remaining are ongoing and being actively monitored and pursued with landowners.

2.4. In terms of other progress, key highlights include:

- Grasscutting of the higher priority public rights of way network was completed in July 2017 with the second cut due to be completed shortly.
- Surfacing improvement works for Horsford RB3 was completed in September.
- A number of meetings with Parish Councils have been held where local concerns have been highlighted. To date these have mainly been in the south area and include: Forncett, Tacolneston, Tivetshall, Dereham, Wacton, Starston, Beetley and Winfarthing.
- In June 2017, an evening Footpath Warden meeting was attended at Bunwell Village Hall. There was very good attendance and representation from local surrounding Parishes, The Ramblers and members of the public. There were several positive outcomes from this meeting including Parishes working together in the future to cut and monitor their public rights of way. A brief understanding of who is responsible for what on rights of way along with information on how best to report defects to the County Council. The meeting helped in building good working relationships between all the different bodies in attendance.
- 2 vegetation cuts of the Trails have been completed. The third cut will be started in October which will last the winter period.

- Handrail repair work has been completed on the National Trail at Beeston Bump
- Access improvement work has been completed on the Little Ouse Path as part of the Breaking New Ground Project
- Surfacing work has been procured for the next stretch of access improvement on the Little Ouse Path at Santon Downham and this work will commence at the end Sept 2017
- Over £5,000 worth of tree work has been undertaken on the Weavers way, Marriotts Way and on the Pingo trail to make the routes safe
- Norfolk hosted the DEFRA announcement about Natural England progress of the England Coast Path – they are now working on 100% of coastal access. This was attended by Lord Gardiner and attended by members of the local access forum as well as other invited guests. This received local news coverage and national twitter and facebook coverage by Defra

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1. None arising from this report

4. Issues, risks and innovation

- 4.1. None at this stage

5. Background

- 5.1. The background information to this paper is covered by the preceding paper on Public Rights of Way Maintenance, presented to this Committee.

Officer Contact

If you have any questions about matters contained in this paper or want to see copies of any assessments, eg equality impact assessment, please get in touch with:

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